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The Case of the Submerged Chief

We have received several communications asking THE SUN'S opinion of Mr. Roosevelt's recent voyage in the Plunger. Among those correspondents whose tone is not flippant is "B. F. H." of New Rochelle. He says:

"I know that President Roosevelt has the reputation of being impulsive, but when I read in THE SUN that he took a dive in the submarine boat, I was both surprised and disappointed, for this was no matter of impulse, but must have been the result of deep reflection."

"What valid excuse can there be for his voluntarily risking his life in such a dangerous experiment? Perhaps I exaggerate the danger, but it would seem that the present development of the submarine boat does not warrant any one in taking such risk without such good reason as a compelling sense of duty, which certainly did not pertain in this case."

"And what about the President's duty to the great party which elected him, and the many important and vital interests of the nation, which all who have studied the subject have wisely handled as far as they can? Why then must he comparatively few who would not regard his death at the present time as a great national misfortune?"

"It would be interesting to know what THE SUN thinks about this incident. It does seem to me that if the Plunger, for any reason, had not come to the surface again, the consequences might have been momentous."

Another correspondent, Mr. C. A. Hamilton of New York, asks:

"Is it any more dangerous for our Chief Magistrate to take a trip in an airship than for him to go down to the bottom of the ocean in a submarine?"

"Will THE SUN please enlighten its readers as to the difference in the danger to human life between a trip in an airship and a plunge into the depths of the ocean in a submarine boat?"

"As President Roosevelt is likely to take a trip in an airship some time, it seems to me that THE SUN should enlighten him as to the limits of the risk he would take on his life-making such a journey."

We do not regard it as probable that Mr. Roosevelt, while President of the United States, will undertake a journey in an airship. If the opportunity offered, and the adventure seemed attractive to his fearless spirit of enterprise, he would doubtless be deterred not less by a sense of official propriety than by consideration for the feelings of the millions who would view the excursion as the foolish risking of an exceedingly valuable life. It is a mistake to suppose that utter recklessness is an element of Mr. Roosevelt's personal courage. Like most really brave men, he has the clear perception of the difference between the risk that serves a useful purpose and mere bravado. In the present state of experimental aeronautics, there is no service which the President could imagine he was rendering to his country by an ascent in a balloon.

On the other hand, we do the President the justice to believe that a much higher motive than the gratification of personal curiosity or the love of adventure impelled him to go down in the Plunger. The submarine naval service is to be an important branch of the military establishment of which Mr. Roosevelt is the Commander-in-Chief. Actual experience of the capabilities of one of the submarines must have seemed to him the most desirable addition to his theoretical knowledge of the efficiency of this weapon of war. Furthermore, nothing that he or any other American could have said or done was so directly calculated to inspire confidence in the hearts of those whose professional duty it will be to navigate and perhaps to fight war vessels of the Plunger class. There is no denying that recent tragedies in both the English and French submarine service have tended to impair the morale which is indispensable to the successful operation of these boats. The President, as President, saw a chance to strengthen the confidence of officers and men, and not as Mr. Roosevelt but as President Roosevelt, he took the personal risk for the sake of the public illustration and example.

We cannot doubt that Mr. Roosevelt wanted to go down in the Plunger. It is quite another thing to assume that he went down merely because he wanted to, and for no other reason; or that his other reason was not sufficient in his estimation to counterbalance the more or less remote danger to the life of the Chief Magistrate which the adventure involved.

The North Pacific Cable

Seward, Alaska, has just been brought into communication with the world by the cable which Major Glassford of the Signal Corps brought to shore and connected on August 7. This makes the sum of the Government's Alaskan cable amount to 2,300 miles. To the submarine service must be added more than a hundred miles of land wire stretched from Valdez to Eagle City, on the boundary between Alaska and Canada's Yukon Territory, and branching off at Ketchikan down the valleys of the Goodpastor, Tanana and Yukon Rivers to St. Michael. To the sea and land service must be added the service of the air, the 107 miles served by the wireless system between St. Michael and Nome. All this work has been done by the activity of Gen. GREENE, Chief Signal Officer of the Army. One can scarcely blame the burghers of Seward for the hearty irreverence of their first message out of

their remote seclusion, in which they say, "Thank God and GREENE!"

Seward, a name worthy to be recorded on Alaskan soil, is so new that it does not appear on charts so recent as those of the Century Atlas of 1902. It is built at the head of Resurrection Bay, on the southeast face of the Kenai Peninsula. On the day that the cable was brought ashore its weekly newspaper became a daily, with the promise that, though less elaborate in detail than in Seattle, Chicago and New York, no important occurrence in the world's news will pass unchronicled in Seward. From our remarkably prompt contemporary, the *Gateway*, we learn that Seward is now the tidewater terminus of Alaska's first railroad to the interior, and that it intends to become the metropolis of the great Northwestern Territory.

These remote metropolises welcomed the cable by giving a banquet to Major GLASSFORD and his fellow workers at the Kenai Club. At this dinner it was made known that it is planned by Gen. GREENE to advance the cable to Dutch Harbor, on the island of Unalaska, and, in case this should be found impracticable, to extend the cable to the northern Pacific base on Kyka Island, to extend the service as far as that remote outpost of the westernmost Aleutians.

As the cables opened by the Government for the transmission of commercial business, it is expected that the Japanese will lay the comparatively short link from their northern telegraph post to Kyka, thus completing a trans-Pacific submarine line far shorter than that recently put in operation between San Francisco and Manila by way of Hawaii.

Our Public Domain

At the meeting of the National Irrigation Congress held in Portland, Ore., a few days ago, Mr. JAMES J. HILL attacked our public land laws and called attention to a system which, beyond any question, demands correction. He said:

"The need of more land space for the home builders is created by the rapid settlement of the country and precipitated and aggravated by the loose policy of land laws, which tend toward the exhaustion of the public domain by the land monopolists and speculators. Except in a few selected spots, where the influence of the railroad companies as colonizers has been exercised to secure actual settlement on their lands, the influx of actual cultivators is so small as scarcely to be reckoned with."

Mr. HILL and President ROOSEVELT are long way apart on the question of Government regulation of railway rates, but they are in full and complete harmony respecting the need for a thorough revision of our land laws. In a communication submitted to Congress, under date of February 13, 1905, with a partial report of the Public Lands Commission which was appointed October 22, 1903, Mr. ROOSEVELT said:

"I am in full sympathy with the general conclusions of the commission in substance and in essence. The existing conditions, as set forth in this report, seem to require a radical revision of most of the laws affecting the public domain. If we are to secure the best possible use of the remaining public lands by actual home makers."

The conclusions with which the President agrees so fully are, briefly, that our present land laws are antiquated and utterly unsuited to present conditions, and that their continuance can result only in serious loss and injury to the nation.

The report of the commission states that the total area of the public lands of the United States, exclusive of Alaska, was originally 1,441,436,180 acres. Of this on June 30, 1904, only 473,396,402 acres, or about one-third of the original area, remained as property of the nation. The financial loss to the country under the operation of the present laws, in comparison with that which might and should be done under new laws, finds illustration in an experience referred to in the report of the commission.

In December, 1903, standing timber on 175,893 acres of land in the ceded portion of the Chippewa Indian Reservation, in Minnesota, was sold for \$2,650,903, or at the rate of \$15.06 per acre. This covered only the timber, and the title to the land remained with the Government. Had this land been disposed of in the customary manner, under the timber and stone act of June 3, 1878, the land, timber and all would have brought \$2.50 per acre, or \$439,707, with title to the land transferred to the purchaser. By the system employed in the case, the Government obtained more than two and a quarter millions of dollars, and still owns the land. The commission recommends with emphasis the repeal of the timber and stone act.

The precise nature of large areas of the public domain is known only in a general way. The report says that the agricultural possibilities of the remaining public lands are as yet almost unknown. Lands which a generation ago, or even a decade ago, were supposed to be valueless are now producing large crops, either with or without irrigation. The commission declares that until it can be "definitely ascertained that any given area of the public lands is and in all probability forever will remain unsuited to agricultural development the title to that land should remain in the central Government in trust for the future settler." This would prevent the speculative absorption of large areas which may be rendered fertile and valuable under the reclamation act.

The public domain problem is huge and complicated. The glaring faults of the present system find illustration in the legal proceedings in the Federal Courts in California against BENSON, HYDE, DIMOND and others, for conspiracy to defraud the Government in the matter of forest land reserves, and in the more recent proceedings of the Interior Department against MITCHELL, HERMAN, WILLIAMSON, HALL, FRANKLIN and some sixty others on similar charges. By what conceivable process is it possible for one group of men to acquire honestly the title to a domain aggregating 14,539,200 acres of Government land? Yet this area, equal to three times that of the State of New Jersey, or one-half that of the State of New York, is claimed by a few men who have an office in San Francisco.

Public lands as well as public office are a public trust. Under laws framed

before their potential value was at all realized they have become the spoils of private graft.

It is high time that our land laws were revised in the interest of the country and for the proper conservation of areas which should some day make homes for millions of our rapidly increasing population.

Gen. Jones on Election Reform

Several months ago the legislative committee of the Utah Chamber of Commerce made a report to that body urging numerous changes in the laws under which primary elections are conducted in this State. The chamber, favorably impressed with the conclusions of its committee, published the report and submitted it in the form of a circular to a number of prominent residents of the State, requesting their cooperation in an effort to have the suggestions embodied in a statute. Among those whose assistance was asked was Gen. EDWARD FRANK JONES—"He Pays the Freight"—ex-Lieutenant-Governor of New York, ex-member of the Massachusetts Legislature, the man who commanded the Sixth Massachusetts Volunteers on their trip to Washington in 1861.

Gen. JONES is too old and too wise to expect the world, or even a small corner of it, to be reformed by legislation. However, he replied to the Chamber of Commerce politely, declaring that while he did not believe the millennium to be close at hand he was willing to do what he could to hasten its coming. Personally, Gen. JONES said that he thought "a large majority of professional politicians do not desire an honest expression of the will of the people."

On his own account he had a plan for the purification of politics, which he outlined in these words:

"Although not within the province of my question, permit me to express a view in relation to our elective system which I have long entertained. The army of petty political workers to protect the purity of the ballot box should be disbanded. The object of their existence is to find a means of paying these political parasites, camp followers as it were, for their work, which had better be left undone."

"I would do away entirely with our present registry system. I would prepare an oath to be taken by every man proposing to vote as to his name, age, residence, etc., to be signed and sworn to before casting his ballot. I would protect this by the penalty of forgery rightly enforced. A reward of \$100 should be offered for convicting evidence. I think that such a law would effect a cure."

"Our first election under the provisions might possibly seem like a failure, but our prizes offered for evidence, would be an effective reward, and illegal voting would be practically done away with."

Gen. JONES is in his seventy-eighth year. His life has been an active one, and during his career as business man, manufacturer, soldier, politician and author he has seen many things. His estimate of the number of perjurers and informers in New York is not likely to puff with pride the breast of any son of the Empire State, but Gen. JONES is probably willing to defend it against denials. His plan has the merits of simplicity and directness, and, if for no other reason, is interesting as the settled opinion of a man whose experience entitles him to an attentive audience when he speaks on public questions.

Trade on the Juba River

The *Daily Consular and Trade Reporter* quotes "an interesting article on trade opportunities in East Africa" from the *Engineering Times* of London. The article is from the pen of Mr. ARTHUR P. JOLLY, who, having lived in the region for nine years, knows all about the vast commerce of the great Juba basin. He urges British manufacturers to take advantage, "in systematic manner," of the "immense openings for trade" in that area. The natives want "iron, copper and brass ware, building material, coals, agricultural implements and many other articles."

In view of the fact that the Negus of Abyssinia, a near neighbor of the dwellers on the banks of the Juba, has recently flung wide open his commercial gates to the surplus products of the United States, it occurs to us to ask why we may not kill two birds with one stone and combine our Abyssinian commerce with that of the Juba River. It is true that our sales to MENELIK's subjects last year are included in the \$19,661, which we sold to "all other Africa," but that is no reason why we should not also participate in the Juba River trade.

When it gets here, the Brilliant Star of Zanzibar, which is not far from Kisumu, the seaport city of the Juba, may be able to throw some light on this important subject. Meanwhile there are a few opportunities nearer home.

A Georgia Launching

The people were at the Rockmart "depot" to meet Lun Saturday. The Craig-Cowan band, "one of the best in the State," pumped the most conscientious wind and blew its loudest fanfares as he got off the car. As he walked—good, democratic, plain citizen—from the station to the hotel he "was greeted," as the Hon. MITT SAUL tells us, "by hearty cheers." At 11 A. M. he was escorted to "a beautiful grove," himself more beautiful.

"The crowd," as we learn from Mr. SAUL, "was packed about the grove like they used to be packed in the old campaign days, the only difference being that this crowd was unanimous." All crowds in Georgia are of one mind as to the Hon. HOKS SMITH, who, as one of his supporters puts it, "has no ambition for the office, but is seeking to be elected in compliance with the almost universal desire of the people."

Millions of people from the counties of Polk, Bartow and Paulding were at the grove. Colonel EVERETT, sometime a Representative in Congress and at all times the first of living Cracker orators, introduced Mr. SMITH in a masterpiece five minutes long. Beginning with the day when "old Mother Earth was thrown into infinite space by the hand of Omnipotence," the Colonel sat "in the inextinguishable lap of commerce," made brief, graceful reference to SOLOMON, CROesus and LARABUS, and came down like a thousand of brick upon the cor-

porations, "charged with not only transcending delegated authority, but with treasonable designs upon the creative power itself." He then gave this deserved "tribute" to the place, the occasion and the honored guests:

"The citizens of this beautiful and progressive little city, an important factor in the make up of the grandest county of the grandest State of the grandest republic on the footstool of Omnipotence, have invited me to present their views on the various conflicting interests confronting us."

Then in the grandest style, the grandest orator of the grandest little city of the grandest county of the grandest State of the grandest republic introduced the grandest man on the footstool:

"Among those present we are pleased to recognize one who has distinguished himself in whatever endeavor undertaken. Whether in the field of literature, journalism, finance, law, diplomacy or the form, he stands to-day the peer of any citizen of the Commonwealth. Having assiduously marched to the front of the march of the nation, having successfully performed the duties of the most varied and difficult portfolio of the national Cabinet, he returned to his adopted city and has been incessant in his efforts to ameliorate the school facilities of every poor boy and girl within its limits."

"This, my countrymen, is his crowning achievement, and is 'as broad as upon the waters, that shall be gathered after many days,' but, in comparison with those that await him, the honors already attained are as 'a few pebbles from the sea.' With great cause of premeditation he bravely before him the Hon. HOKS SMITH."

"I refer, fellow citizens, to the Hon. HOKS SMITH of the county of Fulton, whom I now have the honor and pleasure to present."

The launching of Mr. SMITH was accompanied with "vociferous cheers." That grand crowd proceeded to sail into the railroad.

It was a great week in "launching circles." At Rockmart the Hoke Smith was launched on the ocean of preferment. At Toledo the Burgomaster of Atlanta was reported as laden beyond Pilgrimage's mark.

An adventurous and intrepid partisan in the never fallow field of Massachusetts politics is D. H. TOOMEY of Springfield, Democrat. He is a member of the Democratic State Committee in Massachusetts, and decided to hold the nominating convention on Oct. 7, probably, but not certainly, in Faneuil Hall. This detail disposed of, and JOSHUA QUINCY having been heard from on the state of the Union and the national situation, Governor DOUGLAS to be a candidate for reelection. It was then that JOHN H. MCNAMER was endorsed for Governor. MCNAMER for Governor! This in the presence of QUINCY, the pacificator, and in the absence of MILES, the warrior candidate, and in total disregard of the feelings of the supporters of THAYER, GASTON and the other past, present or future candidates for the Democratic nomination for Governor.

MCNAMER may have every political qualification desirable for a candidate, but the abrupt termination of his name into a hushed silence at the Springfield convention by TOOMEY richly invited the severe rebuke it received. It was sternly voted down by an overwhelming majority, and a dignified and decorous adjournment was taken by the members of the ruffled committee.

MCNAMER mentioned when MILES is willing!

SUNFLOWER IS A FLOWER

Marshall, J., of Missouri's Supreme Court Has Decided It Is Not a Weed.

To THE EDITOR OF THE SUN:—Sir: As to your question, "Is a sunflower a weed or a flower?" I have the honor to inform you that, to wit, the Supreme Court, the highest tribunal in this State, has given the answer. In the case of *St. Louis vs. City* (1903) 179 Mo. 8, the defendant City of St. Louis was charged with the maintenance of a weed in the city of St. Louis, which provided (first) that the owner, lessee or occupant of any lot of ground in the city "who shall allow or maintain on any such lot any growth of weeds or grass, or any other growth, which is a nuisance, or which is a source of annoyance to the public, or which is a source of danger to the public, or which is a source of injury to the public, or which is a source of damage to the public, or which is a source of loss to the public, or which is a source of expense to the public, or which is a source of trouble to the public, or which is a source of discomfort to the public, or which is a source of annoyance to the public, or which is a source of injury to the public, or which is a source of damage to the public, or which is a source of loss to the public, or which is a source of expense to the public, or which is a source of 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